have been designed to enable the employees to visit their home town for meeting family obligations while in service. Travel facilities for visiting other places are also provided to serving personnel on a reduced scale to give them an opportunity to visit and see other regions of the country so that it may help thme in widening their knowledge and in discharging their duties as public servants. These considerations are not attracted in the case of pensioners and they cannot be considered at par with serving employees for extension of travel concession facilities.

Decline in Industrial Gowth in Steel Plant

2929. SHRI RAMSAGAR : Will the Minister of STEEL be pleased to state :

(a) whether the attention of the Government has been drawn to the news item captioned "SAIL sits over million tonne inventory" appearing in the "Hindustan Times" October 28, 1996;

(b) if so, whether slowdown in the industrial growth has affected the steel plants in the country; and

(c) if so, the steps taken to accelerate the industrial growth in the country?

THE MINISTER OF STEEL AND MINISTER OF MINES (SHRI BIRENDRA PRASAD BAISHYA) : (a) Yes, Sir.

(b) and (c). Demand for steel depends on interplay of a number of factors such as availability of funds with consumers, cost of credit, competition from domestic sources as well as imports, overall industrial growth etc. The aggregate impact of such factors varies from unit to unit.

As per the latest Index of Industrial Production releasd by the C.S.O., the overall sectoral growth of Industrial Production in April-July, 1996-97 was 9.3% as compared to 12.3% in the corresponding period of last year. The deceleration in the industrial growth is confined to a few sectors particularly the Crude Petroleum, Fertilizer and Power Generation. Sector specific Strategies have been initiated to remove constraints in underperforming sectors. Adequate credit with softened interest rates assured to industries through the recently announced busy season credit policy are providing further impetus to growth.

[Translation]

South African Investments in Steel Production

2930. DR. LAXMINARAYAN PANDEY : Will the Minister of STEEL be pleased to state:

(a) whether the Union Government have requested the Government of South Africa to make investments in steel production;

(b) if so, the reasons therefor;

(c) the terms and conditions of investment alongwith the details thereof; and

(d) the reaction of the South African Government in this regard?

THE MEINISTER OF STEEL AND MINISTER OF MINES (SHRI BIRENDRA PRASAD BAISHYA) : (a) The Ministry of Steel have not made any request to the Government of South Africa o make any investment in steel production.

(b) to (d). Do not arise in view of (a) above.

[English]

Promotion from Asstt. Manager to Dy. Manager

2931. PROF. AJIT KUMAR MEHTA : Will the Minister of CIVIL AVIATION be pleased to state :

(a) whether it is a fact that 6 years period for promotion from Asstt. Manager to Dy. Manager viz. 10/12 grade to 13/14 grade in the Indian Airlines in the case of general category and 5 years for the reserve category has been reduced to 4 years for both the categories;

(b) whether it is also a fact that the reserved category employees have been pressing for one year's relaxation as given to them previously and a few meetings with the administration were held by the representatives of the reserved category to resolve the issue; and

(c) if so, the decision taken by the Government in this regard?

THE MINISTER OF CIVIL AVIATION AND MINISTER OF INFORMATION AND BROADCASTING (SHRI C.M. IBRAHIM) : (a) Yes, Sir.

(b) Yes, Sir.

(c) Since the qualifying period has been reduced from 6 years to 4 years, uniformally in respect of all the categories of Officers, it was not considered necessary to extend any further relaxation.

Magnesite in Panthal-Udhampur

2932. SHRI CHAMAN LAL GUPTA : Will the Minister of MINES be pleased to state :

(a) whether huge stocks Magnesite mineral have been discovered in Panthal-Udhampur area of Jammu and Kashmir;

(b) if so, the details thereof;

(c) the steps taken for exploitation of this mineral;

(d) whether the task was entrusted to a company of Hyderabad;

(e) if so, the terms and conditions thereof;